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ABSTRACT

An informal analysis of the concept of interpersonal commitment as it relates to parents, this study includes an examination of the characteristics of this commitment, and a consideration of possible effects of this commitment on both children and their culture. An introductory overview of the study is provided in Chapter I. In Chapter II issues characteristic of interpersonal commitment are analyzed in order to clarify how commitment functions. This analysis includes consideration of how commitment is determined; the focus (object) of the commitment; the differences between interpersonal commitment and other interpersonal activities; the cost of being committed (i.e. what one relinquishes or exchanges in the process of commitment); and the extent to which involvement of a person's interests in a commitment reflects the salience of that commitment for that person. Also included in this chapter are examples of how commitment might function in the parent-child dyad. Chapter III expands on commitment as it functions in the parent-child dyad. Among the issues discussed in this chapter are commitment and attachment, subjective and objective parental goals in the commitment dyad, and cultural aspects of the parent-child dyad. In conclusion, Chapter IV summarizes the functions of interpersonal commitment as they operate for parents, and implications for parental commitment in the American culture are inferred. (Author/MP)

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AN ANALYSIS OF HUMAN COMMITMENT AS IT APPLIES TO THE PARENT-CHILD DYAD

by

Genelle Hamilton Felio

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of Pedagogical Studies

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iii

Table of Contents. v

Glossary vi

Chapter One: Introduction 1

Parent-Child Dyads

Related Studies

Problem and Methodology

Delimitations

Chapter Two: The Structure of Interpersonal Commitment. 8

Common Use of Commitment

Commitment as a Descriptive vs. Valuative Concept

Issues Characteristics of Interpersonal Commitment

Chapter Three: Parent and Child in the Commitment Dyad. 33

Parental Focus

Commitment in the Parent-Child Relationship

Parental Goals in the Commitment Dyad

Chapter Four: Summary and Conclusions 46

Summary

Parental Commitment and Culture

Questions and Suggestions for Further Study

References 51

Glossary

anxious attachment - a relationship in which a young child (approximately one year old) alternates between resisting and proximity seeking behaviors with the mother (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

attachment - a unique relationship between two people that is specific and endures through time (Klaus & Kennell, 1976).

avoidant attachment - a relationship in which a young child (approximately one year old) avoids contact or interaction with the mother (Ainsworth, et al.).

bonding - a process marking the beginning of attachment; it is thought to occur between parent and infant soon after birth if they are allowed to interact (Klaus & Kennell).

child-specific goals - parenting goals based on the individual child's needs.

culture-specific goals - parenting goals based on cultural norms.

object-child - a child who is the target of commitment behavior.

objective commitment - commitment in which the value is other than the object-child or object-person.

object-person - a person who is the target of commitment

behavior.

parent-child dyad - a parent and child who pay attention to and interact with one another.

primary dyad - a dyad that continues to exist phenomenologically when members are not together.

secure attachment - a relationship in which the young child (approximately one year old) seeks contact or interaction with the mother, and which offers a secure base for exploration (Ainsworth, et al.).

status achievement - status awarded due to personal accomplishment (Hobart, 1963).

status ascription - status awarded due to family membership. (Hobart).

subjective commitment - commitment in which the value is the object-child or object-person.

synchrony - a smooth, coordinated enmeshing of alternating actor and spectator roles during interactions between parent and child (Shaffer, 1977).

Chapter One

Introduction

The family is considered to be the prime social unit for nurturing the young child (Kagan, 1977). However, changes in the American family suggest that commitments involving the family unit are weakening. Hobart (1963) points to four factors that seem to be increasing family instability: (1) family functions have been lost to other separate and distinct institutions; (2) family mobility has weakened the family support system; (3) a change from status ascription to status achievement has moved the locus of close relationships from the family to the market place; and (4) value confusion based on values inherent in the family as opposed to those required by achievement in the market place is increasing. Since a parent and child dyad constitutes a primary dyad in the family unit, these trends are directly applicable to the consideration of parental commitment.

Mol (1974) has said that lack of commitment lends itself to a high rate of mobility, weakens one's identity, and is, thereby, indicative of lack of roots. Since family mobility has been considered a factor in family instability, it follows that lack of commitment may be a factor in family instability. When a family moves the supporting relationships

for the family are lost. Friendships, family ties, neighborhood attachments, and institutional supports are withdrawn. Family instability weakens the support system for the child. If family instability becomes widespread, our collective future may be jeopardized.

Mol (1974) has suggested that lack of commitment may also be associated with multiple memberships in various organizations and with the burden of over choice. An abundance of interesting alternatives may interfere with the kind of activity that is essential to being committed. If one is committed to several interests and is intent on realizing what is valued in each, status achievement may be the actual value. Scattering one's interests over a broad spectrum would appear to be related to achievement goals. Since the appearance of the predominance of status achievement has been associated with changes that contribute to family instability, it follows, again, that lack of commitment is closely aligned with the problem. Thus, it appears that the weakening of the family structure that has been considered to be an important unit for nurturing children (See Kagan, p. 1) may be closely associated with lack of commitment. Is it then possible that a return to commitment, specifically parental commitment, might fortify the family unit in behalf of the child? Could commitment to the child, or to the parenting task, be a significant factor in facilitating a particular parent-child relationship, and thus, in

forming the future of the culture into which the child is born?

Parent-Child Dyads

Of particular concern to this study is the parent-child dyad. Bronfenbrenner (1979) says that a relation comes to exist whenever one person in a setting pays attention to another. The two persons involved form a dyad. Differing qualities of relation come into being depending on the members involved and the nature of the activity. Bronfenbrenner classifies dyads into three types: observational dyads, joint activity dyads, and primary dyads. An observational dyad is formed when one member is paying close attention to the activity of the other, who in turn, at least acknowledges the interest being shown. A joint activity dyad is one in which the members perceive themselves as doing something together. The primary dyad is one in which both members perceive that the dyad continues to exist phenomenologically when they are not together.

For parent-child dyads, it is the parent and child who are members. Observational dyads are quite prevalent during the child's first year. Parents monitor infant activity. When there is interaction, the dyad becomes a joint activity dyad. To the extent that the relationship becomes salient for the members, the dyad becomes a primary dyad. Further consideration of the classification of dyads will not be developed. However, the distinguishing characteristics

will be evident throughout this study.

Related Studies

While very little research has been done on parental commitment *per se*, studies of commitment may be found in wide ranging disciplines: these include economics, philosophy of education, psychology, social psychology, and sociology of religion. Their diversity indicates the complexity of the concept. However, many available studies are not directly relevant to this study.

The author was able to locate only one study that used parental commitment as a variable. Rosenberg (1977) tested four family variables: commitment, consensus, resources, and permeable boundaries. It was his purpose to determine their relative influence on the development of handicapped children in a parent mediated intervention program. He found commitment to have the most significant influence on the child's development. For Rosenberg, commitment meant a decision by family members to maintain a handicapped child and to facilitate his learning. The study does not address issues of how the commitment was determined, the focus of parental commitment, the qualities that defined commitment activity, what being committed cost the parents, or the extent to which the parents were committed. The significance of Rosenberg's study is that it identifies parental commitment as a potentially powerful factor in the child's developmental progress. However, it is not clear precisely what Rosenberg meant by

parental commitment. Thus, the study both verifies the significance of parental commitment and points to the need for conceptual clarity. The purpose of this study, then, is to clarify the concept of parental commitment.

Commitment has been seen as an attempt to explain consistency in human behavior (Becker, 1960). Its presence is thought to increase the probability that a given action will occur and in what order (Abramson, Cutler, Krautz, & Mendelson, 1958). It may also refer to the extent of an individual's involvement in various interests (Davidson & Knudsen, 1975; Ford, 1973). For some, choosing from recognized alternatives is a distinct attribute (Brehm & Cohen, 1962), while for others, how one becomes committed is less important than the fact of commitment (Becker; Kanter, 1972). Most authorities recognize that commitment involves cost (Becker; Farley, 1974; Johnson, 1973; Kanter). Others suggest that the focus of one's commitments has a defining social role (Johnson, Kanter). There is agreement, however, that the concept lacks clarity. Two general senses of the concept do emerge. These have been called behavioral commitment and personal commitment (Johnson).

Behavioral commitments are those which constrain the actor to continue a line of action in which he has already become engaged. The actor is not fully aware of this commitment but tends to follow the line of action as a consequence of the initial pursuit of this or another line of

action.

A second sense in which commitment is regarded can be called personal commitment (Johnson, 1973). In this sense commitment refers to strong, personal dedication to a decision to carry out a line of action to completion. It is this sense in which Brehm and Cohen (1962) suggest that commitment clarifies the parameters of one's behavior and reduces the interfering effect of irrelevant or contradictory information.

Problem and Methodology

This study is an informal analysis of parental commitment; an examination of its characteristics; and a consideration of possible effects on both the child and the culture. In the process of conducting the study, it has been necessary to complete the following seven tasks: (1) read materials concerning qualities of parent-infant attachment; (2) consider what parental qualities might precipitate parent-infant attachment; (3) hypothesize that parental commitment might precipitate differing qualities of attachment; (4) search the literature for studies concerning parental commitment and find them very limited; (5) begin a study of commitment in order to consider how it might apply to parenting tasks; (6) identify issues characteristic of interpersonal commitment; and (7) consider how interpersonal commitment between parent and infant might differ from interpersonal commitment between two adults.

In chapter one an introductory overview of the study has been presented. In chapter two, issues of option, focus, activity, cost, and extent will be analyzed in order to clarify how commitment functions. Postulates of interpersonal commitment will be formulated in an attempt to go beyond definition. These are offered as descriptions of function but are not intended to be hypotheses. Examples of postulates as they might function in the parent-child dyad are presented at the end of the chapter. Chapter three will expand on commitment as it functions in the parent-child dyad. An application of the concept of the focus of commitment in parenting will lend itself to a discussion of parental goals. In conclusion, the author will summarize the functions of interpersonal commitment as they operate for parents. By reconsidering the trends that Hobart (1963) has suggested, implications for parental commitment in the American culture can be inferred.

Delimitations

Issues of bonding and attachment in human development will be drawn upon in order to suggest the relevance of commitment to the parent-child dyad. It is beyond the scope of this study, however, to undertake a thoroughgoing analysis of any one of them.

Neither is it intended that this study be considered to embody all aspects of the concept. As commitment is further developed conceptually and enlarged upon empirically its meaning should be more fully understood.

Chapter Two

The Structure of Interpersonal Commitment

Before directly approaching an analysis of interpersonal commitment, it will be helpful to consider what is meant by commitment in everyday language and what kind of concept commitment is.

Common Use of Commitment

Commitment in common language is diversely used and may suggest conceptually polar meanings. When it is used in the sense of pledging one's self to an action or a position on an issue, it is like an obligation (Stein, 1965). It may be used to indicate that one presents something for safekeeping, as entrusting. Or, it may infer preservation as when one commits something to memory. Each of these uses of commitment suggests a sense of choice.

Commitment is also used in a sense of one's being constricted, as if by circumstance. To commit something can mean to deliver it for treatment as in committing a manuscript to flames (Stein, 1965); or committing one's self to a mental institution.

Or, one may commit another to an institution as in committing someone to prison. It can also mean to perpetrate a crime.

The noun form of commit, commitment, is used to name the acts, processes or documents of commital such as in

commitment to a prison, commitment as a pledge or obligation, or the state of being committed.

Commitment as a Descriptive vs. Valuative Concept

A concept can be defined as consisting of characteristics common to something such as objects, events, and the like (Broudy, Smith, & Burnett, 1964). It has been suggested that concepts are most basically classified as descriptive and valuative. A descriptive concept is neutral with respect to preferences while a valuative concept embodies preferences.

If commitment were to be considered a descriptive concept, it would be necessary to be certain that the concept is free of preferential elements (Broudy, et al.). What ought to be or what we want to be cannot be considered. When examining the uses of commitment, one can see that commitments appear to fall into two basic categories, those that are chosen and those in which the committed person has been placed by circumstance. However, if one chooses, he has had alternatives from which to choose (Perry, 1953). If he has selected from among alternatives, he most likely has selected what he prefers. In analyzing commitment, it will be necessary to consider that some commitments are chosen; therefore it appears that commitment is a valuational concept.

Issues Characteristic of Interpersonal Commitment

Clarification of the concept of human commitment requires the consideration of at least five questions: (1) Are commitments circumstantially determined or are they

chosen from a set of alternatives? (2) What is the relation between value and the human object of commitment? (3) How does commitment activity differ from other interpersonal activity? (4) How does what one invests in a commitment define its strength? and (5) How does the extent of involvement of one's interests in a commitment reflect its salience for the committed person? In order to consider these questions this chapter will address the issues of option, focus, activity, cost, and extent.

Option

Becker (1960) claims that the issue of choice in the genesis of commitment is not central; that commitments may be initiated by default or by conscious decision. Commitment by default would be commitment in the sense of constraint, of being trapped in a line of action from which there are no realistic alternatives for escape. If commitments are not chosen, they are circumstances that contain one's action and limit freedom. If one is imprisoned by necessity, he is not free (Perry, 1953). Lines of action that are not chosen may or may not be valuable; indeed, they are likely to be undesirable and, thus, disvalued. Lines of action that are not valued are not cared for or nurtured and, therefore, cannot be considered to be commitment activity.

If, however, lines of action are selected from among practical alternatives, the most desirable line of action will be selected. The actor exercises effective choice and, thus,

acts in the realm of positive freedom (Perry, 1953). Selection of a valued objective with the accompanying endeavor is made because commitment is initiated with the circumstance of option. If one can say that option is a necessary condition for commitment, is it then also possible for one to become committed to a line of action into which one has thus far been engaged due to the force of external condition? If one perceives that he does not have to follow the prescribed course of action; if one can indeed identify practical alternatives; and, if one then appraises the alternatives and makes an effective choice, then the former circumstance can become a commitment.

Prizing and appraising define two modes of valuing (Dewey, 1939). Prizing is a way of finding value or of seeking to realize value while appraisal is deliberately evaluating a thing in order to judge its value (Anderson, 1977). Appraising as an activity of valuing is a part of the commitment process when initiating or affirming a commitment involves selecting from among alternatives, however, it is in the sense of seeking to realize value that more completely involves commitment. Anderson (1977) has specified that seeking to realize value can involve caring for x or nurturing x. It involves pursuing value in its fullest realization that is central to the meaning of commitment. Prizing is central in acting morally in the context of commitment to carry out a solution (Anderson, 1978).

Once a commitment has been initiated, is there any option involved in the prizing process? In caring for or nurturing the value to which one is committed, it is necessary to use effective means if value is to be realized. Selecting effective means implies option because selecting requires alternatives. Thus, option is not only exercised in initiating commitment, but may also be a part of the commitment process. Does that then mean that commitments are not permanent, that they can be reversed?

If one chooses to enter a commitment, he selects from practical alternatives. In most cases, those same alternatives will continue to exist though investment of one's self in the chosen alternative eventually may reduce the salience of those alternatives. Even if the effect of the commitment is to close off alternatives, the choice to pursue the once chosen value can be reversed or abandoned. If the set of circumstances that has been set in motion by the commitment is reversible, and if the commitment is no longer pursued, the former choice becomes a circumstance. However, it no longer retains the status of commitment.

Postulate 1. Commitments are initiated at the point that practical alternatives are appraised and the preferred alternative is chosen. Commitments are reversible in the sense that a choice can be made to no longer pursue the chosen line of action. However, circumstances set in motion by the original choice may not be reversible.

This means that the committing person can identify the practical alternatives available to him in considering any given commitment, and that he can give reasons for his choice. In reversing a commitment, the same type evaluation can be made. Additionally, the committing person can identify the consequences of his commitment.[1]

Focus

Becoming committed in the valued sense can be considered to be a human phenomenon. The committing person is assumed to possess the necessary capacity for making and for carrying out decisions. However, the object of commitment does not require these capacities so long as he is another person. Commitment to human objects differs from non-human objects because of the object's identity with the actor, and because the nature of his response brings commitment activity into the realm of interaction.

The question of focus in human commitment surfaces as part of the process of selecting from among complex alternatives. Focus concerns the relation between the object of commitment and what is, in fact, valued. What is the locus of the standard of value that one uses in the process of being committed to another person?

One's ideals concerning what is wanted or needed can be termed standards of value. Standards of value may exist culturally as norms, or they may be intrinsic to the valuer. When one appraises a commitment against culturally held values,

the process is one of comparison, of matching and contrasting attributes of the considered person against the standard. Commitments thus determined may be termed objective commitments. They involve a sense of obligation to the other person and to the element of the culture that represents the norm.

Standards of value that are intrinsic are related to the worth of persons in the being sense (Buber, 1923/1958). When one finds value in another person intrinsically, the process is one of affirmation. Since the standard of value is essential to the valuer, affirmation of another implies self affirmation. It consists in taking a stand in relation to another. Buber identifies this as the relational event, when an I takes a stand in relation to a Thou. Interpersonal commitments that are determined from value in the being sense can be termed subjective commitments. They involve a sense of giving one's self and of personal risk.

Objective and subjective commitments differ in their convergence of value and object. Object-persons in objectively based commitments serve as targets, or receivers of the commitment activity, in which culturally determined value may be made manifest. Value and person are separate. In contrast, in commitment that is subjectively based, the object-person is both value and target. When commitments are object focused commitment activity involves using or exploiting persons; therefore, persons are the means of realizing value. Commitment activity, when the commitment is subject or person

focused, involve caring, giving, and risking one's self. Since the object-person embodies the valued end, commitment acts, rather than persons, are means.

Can objective commitment then be considered to be interpersonal commitment at all? In the sense that objective commitment does not value the person, but rather non-human objectives, it might not be considered to be commitment at all. However, because it has a person as the target of commitment activity, the interaction is interpersonal. It must, herein, be considered interpersonal, but of a different quality than subjective commitment.

Postulate 2. Commitments that rely on interaction between the committing person and the object of commitment can be considered to be interpersonal. Objective commitments are those in which value and object-person are separate. The person is a means to realizing the end value. Subjective commitments are those in which value and object converge in the object-person. Since the person and end value are the same, commitment activity is the means of realizing value.

Since what is valued is desired over means, priority will be given to what is valued or preferred if the two are not the same. When having to choose between object and value, what is extrinsically valued will be selected when the commitment is objective; when what is chosen is intrinsically valued, the commitment can be said to be subjective.[2]

Activity

Activities of commitment are like other activities of valuing, but with a particular emphasis. Above it has been considered that initiating a commitment requires selecting from among alternatives so that it is primarily an activity of valuing in terms of appraising. Appraisal can occur when a commitment is reassessed as well. Once a commitment is established, however, activities of commitment are more like activities of prizing in the sense of seeking to realize value through caring for or nurturing value (Anderson, 1977). Caring for or nurturing one's value requires full-hearted effort that allows very little to interfere with one's purpose (Dewey, 1939). Full-heartedness describes the primary attitude the committed person exhibits in relation to the nurturing activity.

Nurturing is the more approxpriate term for commitment activity when its focus is in the subjective mode. Activity in the sense of nurturing one's valued object-person can include cherishing, supporting, fostering, encouraging, or ministering to.

Nurturing or caring for suggests an open-ended need, or lack, that the committed person may desire to see satisfied. Seldom, if ever, can a single incident of behavior satisfy the lack. It is seen, rather, as activity with an ongoing quality. Many writers have called commitment activity a line of action (Abramson, et. al., 1959; Becker, 1960; Brehm & Cohen, 1962;

Johnson, 1973). Bronfenbrenner (1979) assigns ongoingness as a quality of activity he calls molar activity. He distinguishes molar activity from activity that is irrelevant and consists of non-connected acts. In addition to ongoingness, Bronfenbrenner assisgns to molar activity the quality of being meaningful to the participants. Activity that is meaningful in terms of commitment is essential to realizing one's value. A necessary characteristic of commitment is connectedness: activities are connected to one another in the sense that they are ongoing, and in the sense that they are meaningful or relevant to what is valued.

One might ask how commitment activity is related to value by the actor. Anderson (1977) has suggested that the methodology of prizing is in the sense of monitoring. Interpreting the modes of monitoring that Anderson sees as essential to realizing value through nurturing, one can suggest that monitoring one's commitments includes the following: (1) identification of factors that contribute most effectively to realizing the value to which one is committed; (2) being open to means by which the commitment may be facilitated with attention to the objective or subjective focus of the commitment; (3) attention to potential irrelevant or interfering factors or threats to the value; and (4) projection of means by which values might be protected.

One is perpetually sensitive to circumstances in the environment that either support or diminish what is valued.

Commitment would appear to sensitize one to promote one's value, heightening the use of resources that might be available. Monitoring is then required in the process of coordinating one's daily behavior with the purposes of one's commitment.

Postulate 3. Commitment activity has a character of connectedness in the sense that it is both ongoing and relevant to the value. Monitoring one's commitment activities consists of being sensitive to what potentially supports or diminishes one's value and acting in a manner that connects what is relevant and protects against what interferes with its realization.

Commitment activities are those which are relevant to what is valued and that demonstrate a consistent quality across time.[3]

Cost

A study of successful and unsuccessful communes that spread across the United States during the nineteenth century reveals that successful communities had several common characteristics (Kanter, 1972). Commitment mechanisms that distinguished successful communities include abstinence and austerity, irretrievable financial contributions, a practice of confession and criticism, and renunciation of interfering or competing interests. In essence, it cost the individual something significant to belong. Cost can be defined as what one relinquishes in order to realize a value to which he has

committed himself. For objective commitments, cost can be expected to be primarily concrete resource costs. Tangible objects or objectives are likely to be exchanged for something valued when one's standard of value is extrinsic. Subjective commitments may be expected to be measured in human costs. One who gives himself to another, who commits himself in the being sense can hold nothing back (Buber, 1923/1958). Cost, in human terms, for subjective commitment would appear to involve risk and vulnerability. Since risk and vulnerability are indeterminate in terms of cost, they can be considered to be unlimited costs.

When one chooses to be committed he accrues potential and actual costs by investing other things that are valuable to him in the commitment (Becker, 1960). Public proclamation of one's commitment invests one's public image with one's effort making the fulfillment of his obligation, or the realization of his value more probable. On the other hand, when one has invested a sufficient portion of himself in a commitment so that it forms a significant portion of his identity, he may want to make his commitment public. His behavior, if it is commitment specific, does that for him frequently.

Postulate 4

The cost of commitment is what one relinquishes or exchanges in the process of realizing value. Objective commitments tend to be realized through exchange of tangible

objects or events while subjective commitments tend to be realized in terms of risk and vulnerability.

The degree to which one exchanges tangible valuables or is willing to become vulnerable and risk one's self for another can afford a measure of the strength of a given commitment.[4]

Extent

Cost represents the degree of one's commitment. In contrast, extent can be said to express the breadth or scope it encompasses. Extent can also indicate any given commitment's position in one's heirarchy of commitments. How extensively a commitment involves the several facets of the committing person's life indicates the salience the selected value has for him. The more thoroughly a commitment includes one's various interests, the more committed he can be said to be.

Total commitment encompasses all aspects of one's life. All interests and effort are invested in realizing one clear and specific value. Total commitment may be only for a short period of time. Emergency personnel operating during a crisis often are totally committed to the task with which they are confronted.

It is not pragmatic to suppose that one could actualize total commitment for the remainder of one's lifetime in its pure form. However, one's intent may be total or his effort may be extensive.

In another sense, however, a commitment that becomes

central to the essential being of a committed person and so satisfies and unifies his being that his interests and desires are singular may be said to be total or complete. It can be anticipated to continue with increasing solidarity because it represents the integrity of the individual.

There is a sense in which commitment can come to involve more and more of a person's life space. As one invests what is valuable to him and gives himself as well, he simultaneously closes of his other options until it is not likely that he will ever change (Kanter, 1972).

Subjective commitments, because they are made in the being sense, will tend to move in the direction of total involvement more readily than objective commitments. It is because subjective commitments are more central to one's essential being. Marriage can become this type of commitment if the commitment between the partners has been subjective.

When commitment comes to involve all aspects of one's existence, it, too, becomes unconditional. When all circumstances or interests in one's life are invested in the commitment, there are no circumstances remaining in which the commitment is not operational. Thus, total commitment can be considered to be unconditional.

Postulate 5. Total commitment involves all of one's interests and effort for the period of time that it is effective. Commitment that is central to one's essential being can be said to be total commitment when it has come to

involve all of one's interests. Total commitments operate unconditionally.

The extent of one's commitment is the ratio of the actual number of one's interests involved in a commitment to the number of interests one has.[5]

Interpersonal commitment may be defined in the following manner: interpersonal commitments are chosen with an awareness of practical alternatives and made to the person-object who may be valued intrinsically or extrinsically; the committing person acts in a manner that is ongoing and relevant to the commitment, involving his other interests, and relinquishing other valuables or risking vulnerability in order to realize value in the object.

Footnotes

[1]One might consider the following example.

Not all pregnancies are planned; not all children are initially desired. When persons become parents, they may or may not have chosen the role. Thus, not all parents are committed. Can parents who have become parents unintentionally become committed? Only if they recognize their alternatives. If an adolescent becomes pregnant without the benefit of a spouse, she may choose to abort or to carry the fetus. If she chooses to give birth she can then choose whether to give up the baby for adoption or to parent the child herself. However, choosing to keep the baby does not itself mean that she is committed to the child. She has merely expressed her intention to give, at least, custodial care. Whether she can commit herself to the parenting task depends upon her being sufficiently aware of the demands of the task, and what not performing appropriately might entail. Her commitment is chosen to the extent that she can identify her alternatives and pursue the preferred line of action.

If one doubts whether a parent can choose not to parent his own child, one need only consider the fact of child neglect. It is clearly the alternative to caring for the child.

On the other hand, if one is not committed, he may not have considered the alternatives. The adolescent may keep her

infant because other adolescents are keeping theirs. However, that does not mean that she is committed to the child; she has merely acted. On the other hand, the adolescent who gives her infant up for adoption may not be uncommitted. She can consider the alternatives and choose what she believes to be best for her child. If she does relinquish the baby, her commitment becomes a circumstance because she most often loses her option by eliminating the alternatives.

[2]Discipline is a goal of a great number of parents. Some parents discipline because they value good behavior; others because they value the child. Consider the following example: A parent takes her four-year-old to Sunday church services. Approximately half way through the service, soon after the sermon has begun, the child begins to squirm, tries to lay his head down on his mother's lap, clanks his heels against the pew, then states audibly, "I want a drink of water." The child has begun to disturb other people. The mother, at this point, has several alternatives of which she is becoming rapidly aware. She can allow the disturbance to continue; she can leave and miss the remainder of the service; she can leave and spank the child for behaving badly and force him to return, or she can extract from her purse a box of quiet things to do which may include a small something to eat.

It is rather obvious that if she continues to do

nothing that the problem will worsen and those around her will become annoyed. She certainly isn't considering the need to provide the child with information regarding his conduct in crowds, so she is not concerned about him. If she leaves, she has allowed the child to manipulate her and has implicitly taught him how to misuse his own power. If she leaves, spanks him, and returns to the service, she may impress others with her firmness; however, she may have undermined her own purposes in several ways. First, the child has still succeeded in manipulating her. Second, any value she may have hoped to transmit is lost and possibly countered by her own angry behavior.

If, on the other hand, the mother has come prepared with a box of quiet things to do, the child does not succeed in manipulating his mother. In addition, the mother has implicitly said, "I understand what it means to be four and I value you as you are. You are important to me." If a goal of the mother includes making the child feel comfortable at church so he will, in adult life, find it important, she has come nearer tomoving in that direction.

The commitment focus reflected in the first three alternatives does not place the value on the child, but on other values the mother appears to hold; they can be categorized as behaviors that reflect objective commitment. The last alternative suggests that it is the child that is valuable and thus reflects a probably subjective commitment.

An example of commitment focus at a more advanced developmental level concerns the growing freedom of the adolescent.

Adolescents who are approaching legal age for a driver's license typically have very strong desires to obtain and use one as soon as possible. Their desire for identity with peers and independence from parental constraint motivates many teens to press parents for a car of their own, most preferably one that is like, but somewhat outclasses, those of their peers. How does the parent's response to adolescent demands reflect commitment focus?

Parents may categorically deny the adolescent driving privileges; they could sign a hardship application permitting the adolescent to drive early and provide him with a desired automobile; or they could require him to take driver's training and provide him with ample supervised practice, insisting on demonstrated competence before permitting him to be licensed.

The adolescent's desire to be accepted by his peer group and to be independent of his parents reflect some of the developmental tasks of adolescence (Havinghurst, 1972). Adolescents need to develop relationships on their own, outside the family. If parents are subjectively committed to the child, they observe him, listen to what he has to say, and weigh decisions carefully, with the aim that he will become what he can become. On the other hand, objectively

committed parents are quite sensitive to cultural norms. They observe what others are doing and consider how they might make their child like, or a little better, than others. Again, the value is on the cultural norm, and the goal is the parent's accomplishment of that standard.

The parent who provides an early license and a car for the adolescent is focused on the cultural norm, and therefore, is objectively committed. However, he may be denying his adolescent the benefits of learning to relate to his peers and others outside the family. By becoming immediately acceptable because of one's status in the adolescent community, he moves from being extrinsically valued by his parent to being extrinsically accepted by the peer group. His own actual value remains unaffirmed.

The adolescent whose parent insists on driver education plus a great deal of parental supervision of driving would appear to be frustrated. Parental demands would seem excessive, particularly from the adolescent's viewpoint; and in so being, would seem to inhibit his development. However, the adolescent whose parent insists on supervising his driving until the parent is assured of his relative competence has a better chance of surviving. In addition, his parent communicates to him that it is he who is valued, and not the parent's competition with other parents. The adolescent is also required to develop interaction skills with his peers (Havinghurst, 1972) that are not dependent upon the cultural

norm for his acceptance. Thus, his interaction with peers has the potential for relationship based on intrinsic value that will ultimately become more satisfying for him.

Finally, one must consider the parent who refuses the adolescent the right to drive or own a car at all. It would seem that this parent is highly committed to keeping the teen safe, and to providing him with ample opportunity to interact with peers on a less culturally dependent level. However, he is not developing the skills for survival that others in his adolescent community are developing (Havinghurst, 1972). He is being denied the privilege of developing in this area. If the parent who has consistently prevented development in this fashion, it is doubtful that he is a committed parent at all. Developmental needs appear to be ignored; neglect is thus indicated.

Central to the issue is not whether the adolescent is allowed to drive, or to own a car, but what the parent is attending to in relation to development. The uncommitted parent ignores, and thus neglects, developmental progress. The objectively committed parent makes parenting decisions with an emphasis on value other than the child. Subjectively committed parents attend primarily to the child and his developmental progress.

[3]One might consider the dilema of a divorce court judge in an attempt to understand commitment activity.

A judge presided over a difficult divorce case in which both parents demanded custody of an only child who was of elementary school age. Since the separation, the child had spent six months with each parent. Being a conscientious judge who was concerned about the future of the child involved, he desired to award custody to the more committed parent. It would seem that each parent had been active in behalf of the child. Necessities and some wants had been provided by each, and each parent had spent regular periods of time involved with the child.

The judge elected to appoint an impartial observer to gather information that would allow him to determine which was the preferable parent. The observer reported that Parent A had done many visible activities with the child, taking him to the spring carnival, numerous movies, and shopping for things that were pleasing to the child. When the child was with Parent B, they were seldom seen doing things together. However, the observer learned from the child's teacher that Parent B had tutored the child when he fell behind in school. He also learned that Parent B called the child regularly while he was living with Parent A, "just to keep in touch." Parent A, on the other hand, refrained from calling when the child was living with Parent B.

The judge awarded primary custody of the child to Parent B because he felt that Parent B's parenting activity was that of a committed parent. Parent B had demonstrated an ongoing quality about his activity by calling when the child

lived with Parent A. Parent B's tutoring seemed to be more relevant to the developmental needs of the child. And, Parent B monitored the child's well-being throughout the year as evident from the telephone calls and the parent's being aware of the child's educational needs.

[4]It is rather simple to see that in the parent who gives up time, energy, or material resources in behalf of his child that some degree of commitment is present. The mother who purchases a toy that she feels will encourage development or give the child pleasure with money she was intending to spend on fabric for a dress for herself has obviously made a sacrifice. Or, the father who spends his week-end helping his son to build a model airplane has relinquished his own time in behalf of his son.

However, commitments involve risk and vulnerability as well. One might consider the following vignette:

A prominent politician's daughter is found by her parents to be abusing drugs. In attempting to help her the parents find that the program with the best recovery rate requires family involvement in group counseling. Interaction in the group requires that the parents become vulnerable both to the daughter and to a few other parents that are also constituents. In spite of the fact that personal and family problems may become public, the parents go ahead with the treatment, participating fully. Herein, the cost is potentially

devastating; the father is risking losing his political office and both risk losing the social position that accompanies political office. Nonetheless, the parents choose to risk themselves in the hope that their daughter may recover.

[5]A new mother who is a professional considers whether to return to work or to spend all of her day nurturing her infant. In assessing the needs of the baby, she determines that she can accept a job that is half time, twenty hours per week. A reliable nursery will accept her child. However, at the infant's six weeks check-up, a serious physical problem is uncovered that will require an extended hospital stay with intervening care outside the hospital. The mother's commitment to the infant will require that more of her other interests, i. e. professional involvement, personal time, and what she might have spent her money for, be subordinated to the infant's needs.

In coordinating her parenting interests with other interests, a heirarchy of values and commitments will emerge and form a priority structure. All interests below her infant on that priority structure will tend to be relinquished with the new demands of the infant. If there are interests that have a higher priority than her child, that child's needs will tend to be sacrificed to them.

For the committed mother, the child must be, or must move into the higher priority position as his needs come to

demand investment of her other interests if she is to remain committed. Thus, when the mother learns of her child's physical condition, if he is her priority commitment, her other interests must be reassessed in light of his needs.

Chapter Three

Parent and Child in the Commitment Dyad

A child's perception of his value is in the eyes of his parent (Kagan, 1977). He acquires his perception in the process of their interaction. The nature of the child's concept of his value is directly related to the focus of the parent's commitment. What is the nature of focus for parental commitment?

Parental Focus

The relation between the child and what the parent most values in relation to the child defines parental focus. One might consider the following example: A father whose son is now old enough to play baseball in the boy's summertime league accepts a position as volunteer coach so his son can play. The father practices extra with the son in order to help him qualify for his chosen position. It would appear that this father is committed to the son and to parenting. Coaching after hours would seem to be a sacrifice. However, in a playoff game the son commits an error that costs the team the game, and thus, the city championship. It is at this point that one might discern the father's true value focus. If the father became angry and blamed the boy for the loss, one might conclude that the father's value is his role as a winning coach. If the father put his arm around the boy and audibly proclaimed, "Good game, son. We all make

mistakes," one might suspect that his image as a good father was the important value. If, on the other hand, he quietly said, "It's been fun. Let's do it again," one might conclude that it is the relationship with his son that matters to the father. The father whose value was coaching or parenting demonstrates instances of extrinsic valuing in which case the commitment can be classified as objective. The father who values the boy can be said to be subjectively committed.

Objectively Committed Parents

It has been argued that value extraneous to the person who is the object of commitment is objective commitment. Objectively committed parents are those who exert a great deal of effort at being good parents, but whose value is related to culturally defined attributes of the child rather than the child himself. Valuing socially acceptable traits of one's child may mean that parental competence is the hidden value. When the parent's value is extraneous to the child, he comes to feel that his worth is contingent upon matching himself with what the parent finds to be valuable. His own sense of self worth is thus diminished (Hobart, 1963). The child's relationship with his parent may be busy, but it will lack closeness. Ausubel, Sullivan and Ives (1980) label this child as a non-satellitizer. His value is in terms of the parent's ego needs rather than his being valued for himself. He therefore becomes lonely and possibly alienated. Most children will try repeatedly to win parental esteem by trying to match the parent's image of a good child. Either

the child will succeed in his bids for parental esteem and become over-valued and thus become a depository for parental ego; or he will gradually disengage. In the former case, either the parental value will be sustained and he will gradually become alienated from his own essential being, or he will have to step down from the fragile pedestal he occupies. In the latter case, he despairs of ever pleasing the parent. No matter what the appearance of the relationship with his parent, it lacks substance.

Subjectively Committed Parents

Parents who value the child for himself and are committed to him can be said to be subjectively committed. They are free to value the essential being of their child because they are aware of their own essential value. Valuing one's child intrinsically is an affirmation of the parent, the child, and the relationship. An affirmation of the child requires recognizing that he is unique and separate, and at the same time like and in union with the parent. The child thus valued is free to discover the evolving person that he is and to affirm himself. He implicitly has permission to explore his own thoughts and feelings, his own desires and interests. He has no need to please the parent because his parent is already pleased with him. He needs, wants, and frequently accepts discipline because it is done for the purpose of enabling him rather than of forming him. Subjectively committed parents are not permissive in the sense of lacking control. They need to guide and discipline the child, sometimes firmly

for the purpose of providing clearly defined parameters in which the child is free to explore. Baumrind (1969) has called this quality of parental control authoritative. The authoritative quality follows from the commitment focus rather than fostering it because it is the valued focus on the child that creates the need to set this type parameter. Subjective parental commitment can then be said to be representative of positive freedom (Perry, 1953).

Contrasts in commitment focus suggests definite differences in the parent-child relationship. Whether the parent-child relationship begins at the moment of conception, the moment of first perceived movement, or at birth is debatable and beyond the scope of this study to resolve. Consideration of the role of parental commitment in the development of the parent-child relationship will herein be focused on the child's first year of life because it is thought to be the most crucial.

Commitment in the Parent-Child Relationship

The aim of relation is contact with one another in the sense that the two members share with one another something that is essential about their being. For Buber (1923/1958) this relation is stated in his primary word, I-Thou. The inborn Thou touches and is touched, bringing about a mutual sharing or tenderness. The more fully a relation is shared the more it becomes unconditional. When a primary dyad shares this mutual relation there is affirmation of one

another's being.

Bonding is a process in which newborn infants and their parents seem to acknowledge one another. It has been designated by Klaus and Kennell (1976) as the event that initiates attachment. In a study of sixty dyads of mothers and their firstborn infants, mothers who had forty-five minutes of skin-to-skin contact with their infants during the first thirty-six hours following delivery showed more affectionate behavior at one year than those whose contact was delayed (Hales, Lozoff, Sosa, & Kennell, 1977). Bonding is thought to take place within a few hours of birth if the parent and infant are allowed en face, and preferably, skin-to-skin contact.

Other researchers suggest that the process of becoming attached is less immediate (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Sroufe & Waters, 1977; Waters, 1978). Ainsworth et al. identify the first twelve weeks as being a period in which infants are most attuned to human stimuli. They term this the pre-attachment period. When the infant can focus clearly he begins to seek proximity with the mother. When this happens, the second phase called attachment-in-the-making begins. It is also during this time that the appropriatness of the maternal response to the infant can facilitate the infant's confidence in his ability to control what happens to him (Bell & Ainsworth, 1972). Once an infant is able to establish proximity by locomotion he is considered to be in the period of clear-cut attachment.

An attachment can be defined as a unique relationship between two people that is specific and endures through time (Klaus & Kennell, 1976). During the phase of clear-cut attachment infants can be classified into three groups in terms of interaction with their mothers. (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Sroufe, 1978; Waters, 1978). Infants who avoid proximity or interaction with the mother in strange situation episodes and who tend to ignore her following a brief absence can be said to be avoidantly attached. Infants who enjoy proximity and contact, or interaction, and who actively seek it in some form are classified as securely attached. These infants use the mother as a secure base from which to explore by maintaining visual, though not always physical, proximity. The infant who shows alternate patterns of resisting and seeking contact or interaction is said to be ambivalently attached. This infant frequently clings to the mother but may show his confusion by resisting her on occasion.

Securely attached infants seem to fare better in most aspects of development than do other infants. They are more enthusiastic, more persistent in approaching tasks, show more positive feelings, and seem to have less troubled relationships with parents (Sroufe, 1978). Infants whose parents have been responsive develop a belief in the resources that lie in significant others and within themselves, and thus, they develop a sense of competence.

Bonding and Commitment

Bonding generally occurs when parent and infant are first able to give their attention to one another.. Fondling and eye-to-eye contact gives each the opportunity to come to know, and thus, to find value in the other. The high energy level and elevated infant sensorial capacities (Brazelton, 1979; Klaus & Kennell, 1976) that surround birth and the parent's projected identification with the infant make whatever value is found quite salient. The parent and infant have an incredible opportunity to become absorbed, both in their own being, and in one another's being. This is particularly true for the infant. He has not yet had the opportunity to develop a standard of value. He can only value in the sensorial sense, or in the sense of direct experience (Phillips, 1975). His naive approach to valuing means that the parent who makes himself available to the infant, particularly in a manner that satisfies the infant's physical and interactive needs, will become his standard of value.

It is probable that the newborn infant is more completely able to relate to another person in the being sense than he will ever be again, at least for any significant period of time. If one can assume that it is the adult ego that protects and conceals one's essential self, then the infant who has not yet had sufficient experience to learn to conceal or protect his being is both more available and more vulnerable. The parent, in turn, is invited to risk himself in the being sense with the infant, and a bond is formed.

This may be the purest example of the I-Thou relational event that Buber (1923/1958) has proposed.

However, bonding does not necessarily mean that parent and infant have perceived one another in the being sense. What some parents call bonding may rather be an admiration of their own issue, or a verification of a culturally ideal specimen that they have produced. What they have experienced may be euphoria related to a successful pregnancy or delivery, or the production of a pretty baby, or of a child of a desired gender who ultimately will find that he is extrinsically valued.

As parent and child become involved in daily interaction, they develop a manner of mutual responsiveness (Bell & Ainsworth, 1972; Shaffer, 1977). To the degree that responses are accurate and well timed, a synchrony of interaction develops (Shaffer). Synchrony suggests an accuracy of perception that is attained through careful attention and availability in the being sense. Its presence may be an indication that the commitment process is, indeed, intact in the dyad.

Attachment and Commitment

By the second half of the first year, the infant who has enjoyed satisfying relations with his parent begins to explore his capacities in a larger environment. As soon as he begins to move about on his own his central instrumental relationship with the parent shifts from the realm of parent as helper to that of parent as secure base from which

to explore (Sroufe, 1978). The securely attached infant appears to be comfortable in the knowledge that the parent is a reliable, and valuable person on whom he can depend. In a sense, secure attachment is a hallmark of successful parent-child relation in the being sense. Anxiously attached infants do not tend to explore readily in a strange situation. They cling anxiously to the parent, suggesting that there is a lack of trust, either in the relationship, or in the child's own being. In either case there appears to be some uncertainty as to value. Is it possible that the child has had time to learn intuitively that for this parent, value does not reside within himself, and that he is extrinsically valued? For the child who is avoidantly attached, or detached, it is apparent that he perceives little or no value that is related to himself. Qualities of attachment thus may be an indicator of parental commitment focus.

How can bonding and attachment be connected to parental commitment? Parents who choose parenting because they desire to share life with another person, or who upon discovering a pregnancy determine that they want the child for himself have, in a sense, chosen a commitment. Some may not make the choice until birth or after. If the choice has been made, there should be eventual bonding.

It follows that whatever the nature of the early commitment, that unless some crucial event occurs to shift the focus, the development of the parent-child relationship can be expected to continue in the same mode.

Parental Goals in the Commitment Dyad

Childrearing takes place not only in interaction between parent and child, but in relation to other persons with varying significance to the parent or child, in relation to other dyads, and within the community as a part of the culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parental goals are among the prizing activities that nurture one's value. Culture-specific goals address the child's membership in the community, while child-specific goals involve the child's growth as a person within the community of person (Tillich, 1963). Consideration of each category of parental goals is necessary if one is to more fully understand the nature of parental commitment.

For any culture, the purpose of the parenting role is to produce children who will be able to function in a manner that will contribute to the perpetuation of the culture. In the past this has been a simpler task because parents could more or less expect the culture to remain constant (Mead, 1970). However, contemporary cultures, particularly in the United States, have progress as a goal. Parents can no longer depend upon current values and cultural modes to remain constant. Therefore, accoring to Mead, parents are preparing the child for an altered culture, one that the parent can only vaguely perceive.

In addition, individual parents who find value in parenting have specific goals for their children. Generally these goals relate to their relationship with the child or

to the child's development. Personal parenting goals aim toward a positive relation with the child and the child's progressive development.

Culture-Specific Goals

Since the standard of value for cultural goals is extrinsically determined, the parent is committed in the objective commitment sense. Development of a culture-specific child is of value to the community because he fits in with a minimum of disruption. He enables the system to continue to run smoothly, and in fact, perpetuates the standard of value. Principles found in one's culture set forth the content of one's obligation and duties to other members of the group. Commitment to these principles leads one to behave morally. Moral behavior can develop habits that ultimately lead one to act from love and benevolence (Kant, 1797/1978). The interaction that follows from habit is an investment of time and energy in the other. That investment increases the salience of the relationship. Thus, commitment to cultural value is a significant aspect of parental commitment.

Child-Specific Goals

Committed parents who find value in the person of their child desire that he develop to the extent of his capacity, and that they share a warm relationship with him. Authentic formation of these goals depends upon the parent's ability to perceive the child in his essential being. Thus, child-specific goals are in the subjective mode of commitment.

Acting morally in this sense means obedience to internal law; and is that of establishing one's self as a person. It is what Tillich (1963) calls the demand to become what one is essentially. The parent, in his internal standard of value, seeks to become aware of, and to facilitate the emergence of the child's essential self. Culturally, the value of the child-specific commitment is apparent to the extent that one regards the community to be a collection of unique persons. Contributions to the growth of a culture are individual ones. It would seem that these are more often made by the creative individual who has been taught to value what lies within himself.

A parent who is subjectively committed to his child desires that ultimately he take his place among men. In order to facilitate the socialization of the child, the parent must consider social norms in the process as well. Herein an element of both subjective and objective commitment, of culture-specific and child-specific goals comprises any parental commitment. The definition occurs at some point along a continuum between the two. Caring parents may function in each realm or in both simultaneously as they enact the parenting process. Ultimately, though, their emphasis will tend to migrate toward their own priority value. It is in this sense that commitment can be considered to both reveal and to define the parent's central commitment (Haughey, 1975).

A parental commitment is the choice made by a parent to pursue value related to his child who the parent may value

either for himself, or for his culturally valued traits; the parent uses his resources and may risk himself in order to promote the child.

Chapter Four

Summary and Conclusions

Parental commitment suggests a state of obligation to a child. For parents who are interested in their child, or in childrearing, it is a desirable state. Those who find the child and childrearing activity to interfere with other interests may find it undesirable. Thus, depending on one's desires, parental commitment can be seen as fulfilling one's value or as restricting one's alternatives.

Summary

Parents who are committed to parenting can identify the alternatives from which they chose and the reasons for their choice. Parental commitment is a particular instance of human commitment, unique due to the differing developmental levels of the persons in the dyad. For parents who are objectively committed, the value and the child are separate. Subjectively committed parents value the child intrinsically. When parents are forced to choose, choices that reflect child-object and value reveal parental priority and thus, commitment focus.

Parents who are committed nurture their value. Activities of parental commitment have a quality of connectedness because they are both ongoing and relevant to the value.

The cost of a parent's commitment reflects the strength of the value or its salience for the parent. The degree to which the parent exchanges tangible valuables or is willing to become vulnerable and to risk himself for the child measures that strength.

The extent of one's commitment is the degree to which his interests and desires are involved in seeking to realize value. This is not to say that total commitment to a child is a good thing, or that it is bad; it merely is meant to tie commitment and the investment of one's interests together in a meaningful way for the concept.

Parental commitment is closely tied to both cultural and personal goals for childrearing. Objective commitment would seem to be more supportive of cultural goals while subjective commitment would be more supportive of personal goals. A judicious blending of the two orientations presents the more potentially pragmatic line of action.

Parental Commitment and Culture

At the beginning of this study Hobart's (1963) concern with changes in the American family was presented in order to raise the question of parental commitment. The four factors that appear to be interfering with family stability include: (1) loss of family function; (2) weakening of the support system due to family mobility; (3) a move from family centered status to employment centered status; and (4) value confusion. Hobart has suggested that the family persists because people

want and need the family unit. How might parental commitment interact with the above change factors in behalf of the parent-child dyad, the family, and the culture as a whole?

Parents who are committed to the parenting task would tend to reclaim some of the lost family functions. They would monitor institutions and accept primary responsibility for the quality of the child's educaiton, health, and religious training. They would also tend to seek to institute changes in society that would make it more responsive to the well-being of the child.

Where family mobility has weakened the support system, commitment might function to rebuild that support system when it has been weakened, or to fortify it originally.

Committed parents would need to work through to a new solution to replace both status ascription and status achievement. It would need to be based on intrinsic value. These parents would work to swing the cultural value norms in the direction of intrinsic types of value in order to harmonize life within the community. This harmony could then facilitate a reduction in value confusion.

The extent to which commitment can be an effective mode for our collective future is dependent upon the degree to which being committed itself becomes a value that pervades our culture (Mead, 1970). It will become incumbent upon those who see its value to commit themselves to that aim.

Questions and Suggestions for Further Study

The parent for this study was considered to be either the mother or the father. However, infants have been found to look more to their mothers for nurture and to their fathers for playfulness (Brazelton, 1979). Since commitment activity has been presented to be nurturing one's values, does this mean that mothers have more capacity for parental commitment than do fathers? What might the subtleties of committed fathering include?

It was suggested that bonding might have a quality of euphoria based on extrinsic value, or that it might be a first, and highly salient exchange of essential being. How might this difference be observed, and what possible effect might results have on our understanding of the bonding process and its effect on development?

It was also suggested that secure attachment may be related to subjective commitment. It can be inferred that anxious attachment may be related to objective commitment. It follows that avoidant attachment may be attributed to uncommitted parenting. How might this be verified?

Analytical studies considering the development of human love as it relates to interpersonal commitment could add to the literature substantially. A study to analyze the attributes of monitoring behaviors of committed parents needs to be undertaken as well.

An instrument that identifies committed parents,

particularly in the differing subjective and objective modes, needs to be developed in order to make it possible to evaluate questions of parental commitment empirically.

Finally, a more thorough study is needed to determine what causes parents to become committed. If it were possible to identify these causes, it would then be possible to consider what methods might foster parental commitment.

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